

MARCH OF EVENTS

By JACK WEBER

Franco-Soviet Pact . . .

Why was it necessary for the Soviet Union, according to the lackeys of Stalin, to enter into the mutual assistance pact with French imperialism? The Stalinists would have us believe that history began yesterday; that is, with the advent of Hitler to power in Germany. German fascism is the main enemy of the October Revolution. It is preparing, with the aid of Japan and Poland, an imperialist war of intervention. To put obstacles in the way of Hitler and thereby maintain world peace, it was necessary for Soviet diplomacy to make use of the contradictions in the camp of capitalism; namely, the antagonism between French and German imperialism. These "tactics" are falsely compared—after eighteen years of Soviet power—with the tactics of Lenin in the course of the civil war when Soviet Russia was ringed around by white guard armies and imperialist troops.

But history does not begin with Hitler. German fascism came to power with the "permission" of the Stalinist Comintern. It came to power by the defeat of the German workers, due directly to the betrayal of the German and the world proletariat by the Stalinists. Stalinism is capable of resorting to the worst features of capitalist diplomacy, but was and is incapable of practicing revolutionary politics, the essence of which is to utilize the contradictions, not only as between capitalist enemies, but the far deeper ones that exist at all times, and particularly in the epoch of the decline of capitalism, between the classes.

Stalinist Wreckage . . .

The passage of power from the Leninist to the Soviet Union to the Stalinists, took place over the bridge of "socialism in one country." It was over this bridge also that the October Revolution passed from its period of upswing accompanied by the world-wide strengthening of the proletariat, to the period of decline and defeats under the "savior" Stalin. The Third International turned its back on world revolution while the Soviets engaged in building socialism in one country. The October Revolution lost the offensive while Stalin resorted to the theory of "pure defense" in order to protect the gains of the five year plan.

The German Revolution was felt to be a threat to peace, the peace necessary then to "build socialism in one country." Hence the Stalinists gave no guidance to the German workers; hence they failed to use the class contradictions within Germany, refused to enter into the "counter-revolutionary" united front with the social democracy, and "permitted" fascism to come to power as the easier course, the course of lesser evil. Thus Stalinism, itself a major cause of the German debacle, is historically the cause of the "necessity" for signing the pact with France.

But the fever of the anti-united

front days in Germany now gives way to the chills of the "popular front" and the "sacred union" in France. Both the fever and the chills are manifestations of the same disease, that cancer that saps the strength of the October Revolution—Stalinism. The Bolshevik-Leninists clearly predicted in advance that if Stalinism persisted in its course in Germany, then Hitler would come to power and become the worst threat to the very existence of the Soviet Union. And now again the Bolshevik-Leninists warn that if the French proletariat are misled into following the betraying course laid out by Stalin in France, fascism will again be victorious there too.

In Germany the Comintern refused to enter into a united front with the socialists, then known as social-fascists. But in France Stalinism enters into a "popular front" not only with the socialists but with the bourgeoisie itself. As the guarantee of French imperialism for its pact, the Stalinists will tie the workers to their bourgeoisie, will bring about the "sacred union" of civil peace, will aid in the building up of French militarism, will advocate that the proletariat aid its own bourgeoisie if that bourgeoisie is the ally of Stalin. Stalinism pursues the policy of the lesser evil for the preservation of French bourgeois democracy, hoping thereby to keep fascism from power. This is the road best calculated to lead the proletariat to bloody defeat. For the sake of maintaining the power of the bureaucratic Bonapartist regime in Russia, a discredited growth on the Soviet system, Stalin would sacrifice once more the interests of the world proletariat.

Rules of Class War . . .

The rules of class war are in many senses analogous with those of war in general. The enemy of the working class is the bourgeoisie at home and abroad. The war should at all times be waged against the enemy. In war no enemy is ever defeated by pursuing a course of "pure defense." The Stalinists would pursue that strategy in defending the Soviet Union; that is, the first stage of the dictatorship of the proletariat. The tactics in France and in connection with the Franco-Soviet pact are not in disagreement but in complete accord with the larger and completely false strategy of the Soviet bureaucracy.

If the workers are to capture and maintain power, then they must pursue the Marxist strategy of world revolution, that of turning the defence at the proper moment into an assault on all the positions of capitalism. Today the decisive field of battle is France. The working class of the entire world must rally to the aid of the French workers and help them arm for the final struggle against French imperialism. That will be the best defense of the U.S.S.R., a defense which cannot be entrusted to the Stalinist betrayers.

The Left Socialist Conference --A Letter and A Declaration

Ed. Note: We publish herewith a letter from comrade Seegers on our previous report on the Paris Conference of the Left Socialist Parties and groups (Internationaler Arbeiter Bund). It appears to us that comrade Seegers misunderstands the import of the position taken by the German Socialist Workers Party (S.A.P.) on the question of the Fourth International. The declaration of Schmidt and Sneeveliet, the leaders of the newly-formed Revolutionary Socialist Workers Party of Holland (R.S.A.P.), which is also printed below, throws more light on the real nature of the dispute.)

Letter of Comrade Seegers

Editor, The New Militant, Dear Comrade:

In the issue of March 30 there is an introduction to a translated reprint from De Baanbrecker a note on the Paris Conference February 14. In this introductory note you state that the S.A.P. (Socialist Labor Party of Germany) appeared as the chief saboteur of the slogan for a New (Fourth) International. From the reports on the Paris Conference that I have received (and certainly you have or should have the same information) this does not seem to be the case. Against the motion of Comrades Sneeveliet and Schmidt voted only the two Scandinavian comrades and the comrade from the I.L.P. The S.A.P. and five other comrades abstained because they wanted to demonstrate that they are for a New International but believe it will be attained in a different manner. As the official organ of a responsible revolutionary party, we should be careful to avoid misleading statements, and I therefore hope you will correct this statement in the next issue, or print this letter instead.

The resolution submitted by the

S.A.P., for which ten of the twelve delegates voted, with only one vote against it (Comrade Schmidt abstaining) is as follows: "In the face of the total failure of the Second and Third Internationals the conference notes that the international revolutionary labor movement is at present without a real leadership having the confidence of the movement and that it is therefore necessary to create such a leadership, i.e. a real, proletarian international. The conference emphasizes that the necessary international revolutionary leadership can develop only as the result of a historic process and only through the co-operation of the revolutionary elements inside and outside of the prevailing Internationals. It further declares that this leadership can develop only on the basis of a fundamental renewal (Erneuerung) of the international workers movement. "To accelerate the achievement of a proletarian international capable of action (aktionsfähig), which alone can realize the necessary unity upon a revolutionary basis, the parties represented at the conference resolve: "1. To concentrate with all their power upon initiation of international actions; "2. To utilize all possibilities for the coordination of the ready-for-action forces in the international frame and at the same time to expand the Internationaler Arbeiterbund."

For this resolution voted 10 of the 12 delegates, against it only Comrade Sneeveliet, Comrade Schmidt (O.S.P.) abstaining. According to the Neue Front, the S.A.P. was ready to sign the motion submitted by the two Dutch comrades, namely: "The conference declares that the proletariat, in order to conduct the international struggle, must create for itself a new international," if it had been submitted as a declaration instead of

The 'American Approach'

Ed. Note: This is the third of four articles by comrade Muste. The fourth article will appear next week.

By A. J. MUSTE III.

It is a short and easy step from an undervaluation of internationalism to a nationalistic attitude—or at least to attitudes and expressions which play into the hands of those reactionary forces which use "patriotism," "Americanism," nationalism, chauvinism, in order eventually to smash the workers' movement and to impose Fascism upon the masses. I am thinking of such slogans as "Advance America."

The hold of patriotic sentiment on the masses and the havoc wrought by capitalists and militarists by playing upon it, have been abundantly demonstrated. Those comrades who insist that we have here a crucial problem and that we must know how to deal with it are entirely correct. Yet for the very reason that we are dealing here with explosive material we have to be careful that the bomb we plan to use against the enemy does not blow up in our own hands!

Borrowing Symbols

The idea that seems to underlie a good deal of the discussion on this point is that if the revolutionists would take over the patriotic symbols and slogans, they would get the following instead of the Longs and Coughlins; and attaching new ideas and aims to these symbols they would make the masses fighters for a workers' world. It is a tempting idea to many who foresee the danger of a Fascist triumph and who behold the contrast between the immense following of the demagogues and the handful of supporters of the revolutionary movement. If only we could use their tricks and get the masses to jump on our band-wagon! But, alas, the easy way is not necessarily the right way.

The same eagerness quickly to win a mass following for the idea of a non-profit economy, by the way, leads some to propose that the middle class which seem more rebellious than the workers should be "sold" on the right brand of revolution, instead of looking to the working class as the spear-head of the revolutionary movement. This quick cure Comrade Budenz correctly rejects. Let the middle class organize as a middle class, and the result will be reactionary, to maintain, not to overthrow, the profit system. But "merely threaten a general strike and chills and fever run through the present body politic."

A Deadly Parallel

Equally dangerous and deceptive is the despairing resort to "patriotism." How and why that is the case can be made clear, as one of the comrades has written in about this question suggested, by an illustration from another sphere. Religion, the argument would run, has a great hold on men. It is true that religion, its institutions and symbols, have been used as supports of the existing order. But it is also true that the great prophets of religion have denounced the rich and

as a MOTION, and the majority of the delegates probably would have followed that example, according to Neue Front. As it was, only the two Dutch comrades and the representative of the International Youth Bureau voted for their motion.

Whatever the merits or demerits of the conference and the decisions, I believe revolutionists should be fully (so far as possible) and fairly informed about it. The following parties or groups were represented: 1. The I.L.P. (England); 2. The O.S.P. (Holland); 3. The S.A.P. (Germany); 4. The Independent Labor Party of Poland; 5. The Socialist Party of Sweden; 6. The Iberian Communist Federation (Spain); 7. The "Red Front" (Austria); 8. The S. P. (Maximalists) of Italy; 9. Friends of Workers Unity (Doriot), France; 10. R.S.P. (Trotskyists), Holland; 11. The International Bureau of Rev. Youth (Stockholm); 12. The group "Mot-Dag" (Norway).

Fraternally yours, WILL A. SEEGERS.

Declaration of Schmidt and Sneeveliet

The organ of the S.A.P. "Die Neue Front," in the March 1st edition, in the course of a report on the Paris International Conference in February, presents the Dutch resolution on the new international as an abstract "proclamation" of the new international.

This presentation is false and without foundation. Both Schmidt and Sneeveliet said quite clearly that they realized that a new international could never be formed by a mere "proclamation." Both of them understood the difficulties connected with the formation of the new international. Both of them stated with equal clarity that the first step toward the new international must be the recognition of the necessity for a new international. They refused to add to the confusion surrounding this question by voting for ineffective, compromise resolutions.

The proletariat needs above all clarity and precision on this question. The S.A.P., with its resolu-

Twin Evils of Labor — Nationalism & Reformism

powerful, have pictured a world of peace and brotherhood, etc. Let us harness the institutions, emotions, symbols and slogans of religion to the revolutionary movement, therefore, and to carry the latter to victory! The realist, the Marxist, knows that this is a fantasy. Religious institutions are a bulwark of the existing order. Keep the minds and emotions of men bound to religious ideas and symbols, and you keep them bound to the existing economic and political order. The hold of these ideas and symbols must be broken. As one great prophet pointed out, you cannot put "new wine into old wine-skins."

The state, the governmental system under which we live, is likewise an agency and bulwark of capitalism. We have to overthrow the capitalist state. But that means that we must break the hold of the symbols and the emotions that attach to the present state.

A Practical Example

When in the great unemployed convention in Columbus in 1933 hundreds of honest but politically undeveloped workers were roused to fury against us by labor spies and Fascists, and Arnold Johnson was about to be dragged from the platform and lynched on the ground that he was radical and un-American and did not properly respect the flag, we did not "wrap the stars and stripes around us" or make any effort to claim that we were "patriotic." Arnold Johnson stood his ground, pleaded for reason and calm consideration. When quiet was restored, we claimed that those who raised the issue did so in order to serve the capitalists and their political henchmen by the waving of the flag, patriotic appeals, etc. were constantly used for precisely this purpose, as when men were led to slaughter in "the war to end war, the war for democracy," etc.

Statements about "serving" the nation, the country, the community, have also to be carefully guarded. The notion that the country is "our" country—i.e. everybody's alike, that there is such a thing as nation or community, a mystic something to which we belong and which protects us, is cultivated by the ruling class for the purpose of hiding the fact of class cleavage, of exploitation for the purpose of making the worker think that when he goes to war he is fighting for "his" country, instead of against himself and for the capitalists.

American Tradition

The same caution holds for an uncritical use of "the American revolutionary tradition." There are, to be sure, revolutionary traditions in American history, to which we shall have occasion to refer again. But the dominant American tradition has been that of capitalist expansion, exploitation, imperialist adventuring. Years of experience in workers' education have demonstrated to my complete satisfaction, and I know that all who attended the classes at Brookwood or similar ones elsewhere, will back me up in this, that outside of the actual experience the American worker gets of injustice the most effective way to teach him the real facts of American history, American history, i.e., from a Marxist viewpoint. And this is by no means to teach him in an uncritical fashion that anyone who oppresses labor is a "black betrayer of the ideals of the Founding Fathers" or that "Hancock and Adams slept with a price on their heads."

Quite the contrary, it involves pointing out that Washington with his 30,000 acres of western lands; that Hancock and Adams with their mercantile business threatened with destruction by laws passed by a British parliament in the interest of British merchants, acted in line with their class interests when they engaged in the Revolutionary War and brought the American farmers and artisans into it; that as soon as possible after the war was over they conveniently forgot the "principles" of the Declaration of Independence and in the most high-handed fashion imaginable put over a constitution which protected their property interests against the farmers who had manned the revolutionary armies; and that this constitution has been used ever since as an

instrument of class-domination; those provisions in it intended for the protection of the masses either being perverted like the "due-process" clause or simply not enforced like the amendment granting civil and political rights to Negroes.

By this means faith in America, i.e. in capitalist America, is broken down, and that is a prime essential for the building of a working-class revolutionary movement. We have nothing to gain and much to lose from a romanticizing of American history. The unvarnished Marxian interpretation of it is a priceless instrument in our hands. Certainly in an age when patriotism is the dominant emotion upon which capitalism in its decline calls in order to fasten the chains of reaction and terrorism upon the masses, we must not fall into the trap of arousing sentiments upon which the demagogues can in any case play much more effectively than revolutionists can, and which in the end can only be used to destroy the revolutionary movement.

The formation of a Dutch workers' party proclaiming the necessity for a New International is an important event in the life of the international proletariat. It is the second of the same sort, as the Workers Party of the U. S., formed in December 1934, proclaimed even more clearly the creation of the Fourth International as a most urgent task.

International Affiliation There exists in the heart of the new Dutch party some difficulty on exactly this point. The O.S.P. is a member of the Amsterdam Bureau of Left Socialist Parties and Groups. The Bureau, it is true, is a very loose organization, functioning mainly as an information bureau. Several of the members even recognize the necessity for a New International, although generally hostile to the slogan for a Fourth International. Those that recognize the Fourth International, incidentally

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The Constitutional Amendment

At this point may properly come an analysis of Comrade Budenz's suggestion of "a proposed amendment to the constitution" as a, or the, means to "strike a death blow at the profit system." On the face of the article in question this amendment to abolish private ownership, wage slavery etc. is presented as the fundamental basis for an American revolutionary movement, i.e., the amendment would "safeguard its integrity" (not, e.g., firm adherence to Marxist and Leninist principle); the movement will "give a focal point to the struggle by basing itself" on this amendment.

The proposal of this amendment, as a basic starting point, is essential for any real revolutionary movement in the U.S. If this was not intended, if the amendment is proposed as a slogan, the basis for a tactical maneuver at a certain point, then certainly it was a grave error not to make that clear in a serious and formal political document as this article proclaims itself to be.

A 'Parliamentary' Revolution

If the expressions describing the proposal are taken at their face value, then it must be said that it is clearly and utterly out of accord with the position of the Workers Party. No indication to the contrary being given, one must assume that the amendment is to be put

Fourth International Party Formed in Fusion in Holland

From The Bulletin of the International Communist League (Bolshevik-Leninists).

On March 2, 1935, the two Dutch workers' parties, the Revolutionary Socialist Party (R.S.P.), member of the International Communist League, and one of the signers of the "Pact of Four" of August 1933, and the Independent Socialist Party (O.S.P.), also a signer of the pact, which had, however, not immediately started unity negotiations on account of internal divergences, held their last separate congresses before the fusion of the following day.

The conditions on which the fusion took place had been formulated during a preparatory period of several months. The R.S.P. congress accepted the conditions unanimously, whereas in the O.S.P. a small minority was opposed.

The Name of Party

The fusion congress took place on March 3. There were 1,100 delegates, numerous guests and on-lookers. The spirit was enthusiastic, since a revolutionary workers' party was formed which would have nothing to do with the Second International. The R.S.P. had never been a member, but the majority of the O.S.P., as a left wing, had only left the Dutch Social Democracy a few years before. The name for the new party was proposed by the R.S.P.; several comrades of the O.S.P. preferred the more simple and, from the revolutionary point of view, less forceful name of U.S.P., that is 'United Socialist Party, which was voted down by a large majority.

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There exists in the heart of the new Dutch party some difficulty on exactly this point. The O.S.P. is a member of the Amsterdam Bureau of Left Socialist Parties and Groups. The Bureau, it is true, is a very loose organization, functioning mainly as an information bureau. Several of the members even recognize the necessity for a New International, although generally hostile to the slogan for a Fourth International. Those that recognize the Fourth International, incidentally

into effect in the manner prescribed in the Constitution, viz., by action of Congress, ratification by state legislatures, etc. This is certainly suggesting in a most extreme form the possibility of revolution by parliamentary method which Comrade Budenz has often violently denounced. In a country where it is impossible to get an amendment to abolish child labor passed, the profit system is to be abolished by constitutional amendment!

If the idea is to use the proposal of such an amendment as a slogan, a tactical maneuver at a certain stage of political development, then it is a matter of tactics and not of principle which would have to be discussed on its merits and from all angles when it came up as a definite political proposal in a given historical setting. Even so the question whether it fostered a fetishism of parliamentarism would have to be very seriously considered.

As for tactical considerations, in view of the difficulties and delays in getting any kind of constitutional amendment passed in this country, the proposal does not appeal to me at least. Nor can I conceive of it as making any appeal to workers or farmers generally. There are quicker ways of getting results, and ways more calculated to build labor militancy, as when in 1916 the threat of a general railroad strike forced the Adamson eight-hour law through Congress and got a verdict of "constitutional" from the Supreme Court—which, incidentally, can always have a few judges added to it if the will and the power are available.

If we ever had a situation where passage of a constitutional amendment abolishing capitalism was actually in sight, well, we could then dispense with formalities and write a brand-new constitution for the Workers Republic!

Logic of a False Position

There is one other possibility, viz.: that the idea is that the workers will gain power by revolutionary means and then enact a constitutional amendment. This idea has no merit either. In the first place, when the workers are once in power as a result of revolutionary action, they will not need to stop with an amendment. In the second place, it encourages the notion that in the main the machinery of capitalist government will remain and will serve the needs of a workers' order. That notion is of course a flat contradiction of the position set forth in our Declaration of Principles.

The final article in Comrade Muste's series will appear next week.)

Question Box

By A. WEAVER

A. W., HAMILTON—

Question: In his article on April 6, Comrade Muste states: "If, however, any party refuses to face and discuss the issues we raise, such a party is not revolutionary and a true revolutionary cannot remain in such a party." Is this not the same as Stalinist ideology of leaving the mass organizations to the mercy of the reactionaries because the reformists inside them would not listen to them?

Answer: In the first place the Stalinists used to quit the mass organizations for reasons, theoretical at least, which are other than that which you give here. They merely drew a correct conclusion from an INCORRECT assumption by declaring that the A. F. of L. etc. was "fascist" and that they therefore could not remain inside these organizations.

Secondly, Comrade Muste refers specifically to the revolutionary party of the working class and not to its mass organizations. Different workers have different ideas as to how they are to achieve emancipation and, based on these various conceptions, form themselves into political parties with different ideas and principles (revolutionary, reformist, etc.), so that, because it is contrary to his beliefs, it is obvious that a revolutionary-minded worker cannot remain in an organization which preaches reformism or whose activities lead to revolutionary defeats. This was the essence of Comrade Muste's statement.

The mass organizations of the working class, however (trade unions, unemployed organizations, etc.) are composed of all sections of the class regardless of political or other beliefs because there are economic interests binding the workers together, and the limited framework of such organizations permits unity of the class within them. It is the duty of the advanced worker to stay with the masses at all costs, and to build up the broad organizations embracing them, as means of teaching the proletariat that their emancipation lies beyond these narrow boundaries.

liamentary empty, mechanical, parliamentary democracy with a "strong" policy, which it is true is not, nor yet need be, openly fascist, but which, in case the depression in Holland should become more intense, could take on an even "stronger," a pre-fascist, character. For this reason the defense of the political and economic positions of the Dutch working class requires a revolutionary party which can have no community of interest with the bourgeoisie—as have the social democrats—which does not act solely in the interest of the Russian national bureaucracy—as does the C.P. in any case without influence.

Bi-Weekly Organ The R.S.A.P. has a bi-weekly ("The New Torch"). The theoretical review of the R.S.P. ("The New Way") has been replaced by The International, monthly theoretical review of the R.S.A.P. The new party has about 4,500 members, that is to say more than the C.P. of Holland.

A Left opposition has formed in the C.P.H. during the last year, most of it leaving the party. However the K.A.P. (German Communist Labor Party, ultra left) tendency in the split-off was so strong that the R.S.A.P. gained little with the exception of Comrade Van Riel, former member of the C. C. of the C.P.H. who was one of the leaders of this opposition (C.P.O.).

A Forward Step There can be no doubt that the formation of the R.S.A.P. marks a step in advance, not only in the life of the Dutch workers, but in the international arena as well. The danger of war becomes more and more acute. No one of any political development can believe that the Third International in case of war will be any less catastrophic than its collapse in Germany on the eve of Hitler's rise to power. It is even less credible that the social democratic parties will behave in any other way than they behaved in 1914. The task of the Fourth International is to pose and to attempt to solve the problems which no other organization can solve. For that reason the existence of two parties on the same basic platform, the W.P.U.S. and the R.S.W.P. is a great advantage. Let the opportunists ridicule the numerical weakness of the parties, let the centrist "revolutionaries," such as the S.A.P. cook up their recipes for a New International, let the Stalinists boast, as they did in Germany until 1933—"The existence of living parties growing in both America and Holland furnishes a beginning which may perhaps prove decisive precisely in case of war."

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